

The Current Week in Review

February 16, 2024

IGRC, former congregation settle, suit dismissed

The Illinois Great Rivers Conference has filed a motion to dismiss its lawsuit against the former Cowden UMC, after parties completed the transfer of financial assets as well as transferring the church and parsonage property Thursday. Both the deeds.

The dispute arose with Cowden UMC in September 2023, when local church officials notified the conference that it would not be utilizing Paragraph 2553 to disaffiliate, but rather they would be “disaffiliating/renouncing any affiliation with the UMC, effective Dec. 31, due to irreconcilable differences in faith.” The church also stated they would not be meeting the financial requirements of disaffiliation since they “had paid their dues monthly, believing that they did not owe the UMC any further funds ... and we cannot afford the high disaffiliation cost.”

In response, Bishop Frank J. Beard and the Cabinet closed the church, effective Dec. 31 due to exigent circumstances in accordance with Paragraph 2549.3b. Thursday's settlement amounted to a greater cost than the \$22,821 calculated under the IGRC Disaffiliation Plan, which allowed disaffiliation of United Methodist congregations through Dec. 31. However, those provisions are no longer available to either the church or the conference.

In 2023, 79 United Methodist congregations disaffiliated under the process outlined in Paragraph 2553, which lapsed Dec. 31. The 79 join three other congregations that left in 2021 and 2022.

The IGRC now has 674 churches.